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Agenda item 67 (*b*)

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/61/443/Add.2 and Corr.1)*]

61/164. Combating defamation of religions

The General Assembly,

Recalling that all States have pledged themselves, under the Charter of the United Nations, to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion,

Recalling also the relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights in this regard,

Recalling further the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly on 8 September 2000,[1] welcoming the resolve expressed in the Millennium Declaration to take measures to eliminate the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in many societies and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies, and looking forward to its effective implementation at all levels, including in the context of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 8 September 2001,[2]

Recalling the proclamation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations,[3] and inviting States, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, within existing resources, other international and regional organizations and civil societies to contribute to the implementation of the Programme of Action contained in the Global Agenda,

Welcoming the launch of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, intended to respond to the need for a committed effort by the international community, in order to promote mutual respect and understanding among different cultures and societies,

Welcoming also the progress achieved in the follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action,

[1] See resolution 55/2.

[2] See A/CONF.189/12 and Corr.1, chap. I.

[3] See resolution 56/6.

Underlining the importance of increasing contacts at all levels in order to deepen dialogue and reinforce understanding among different cultures, religions and civilizations, and noting with regret, in this regard, the cancellation of the meeting on "Civilization and harmony: values and mechanisms of the global order", which was to be held in Turkey in 2004 as a follow-up to the Organization of the Islamic Conference-European Union Joint Forum on the theme "Civilization and harmony: the political dimension", held in Turkey in 2002,

Reaffirming that discrimination against human beings on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter,

Convinced that respect for cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, as well as dialogue among and within civilizations, is essential for peace, understanding and friendship among individuals and people of the different cultures and nations of the world, while manifestations of cultural prejudice, intolerance and xenophobia towards different cultures and religions generate hatred and violence among peoples and nations throughout the world,

Recognizing the valuable contributions of all religions to modern civilization and the contribution that dialogue among civilizations can make to an improved awareness and understanding of the common values shared by all humankind,

Reaffirming the need for all States to continue international efforts to enhance dialogue and broaden understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions, and emphasizing that States, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the media have an important role to play in promoting tolerance, respect for and freedom of religion and belief,

Underlining the important role of education in the promotion of cultural and religious tolerance and the elimination of discrimination based on religion or belief,

Alarmed at the continuing negative impact of the events of 11 September 2001 on Muslim minorities and communities in some non-Muslim countries, the negative projection of Islam in the media and the introduction and enforcement of laws that specifically discriminate against and target Muslims,

Alarmed also at the serious instances of intolerance, discrimination and acts of violence based on religion or belief, intimidation and coercion motivated by extremism, religious or otherwise, occurring in many parts of the world and threatening the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Noting with concern that defamation of religions is among the causes of social disharmony and leads to violations of human rights,

Deeply alarmed at the rising trends towards discrimination based on religion and faith, including in some national policies and laws that stigmatize groups of people belonging to certain religions and faiths under a variety of pretexts relating to security and illegal immigration, and noting that the increased intellectual and media discourse is among the factors exacerbating such discrimination,

Noting with deep concern the increasing trend in recent years of statements attacking religions, Islam and Muslims in particular, especially in human rights forums,

1. *Expresses its deep concern* about the negative stereotyping of religions and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in matters of religion or belief still in evidence in some regions of the world;

2. *Strongly deplores* physical attacks and assaults on businesses, cultural centres and places of worship of all religions as well as targeting of religious symbols;

3. *Notes with deep concern* the intensification of the campaign of defamation of religions and the ethnic and religious profiling of Muslim minorities in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September 2001;

4. *Expresses its deep concern* that Islam is frequently and wrongly associated with human rights violations and terrorism;

5. *Also expresses its deep concern* about programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at the defamation of religions, in particular when supported by Governments;

6. *Deplores* the use of the print, audio-visual and electronic media, including the Internet, and any other means to incite acts of violence, xenophobia or related intolerance and discrimination against Islam or any other religion;

7. *Recognizes* that, in the context of the fight against terrorism and the reaction to counter-terrorism measures, defamation of religions becomes an aggravating factor that contributes to the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms of target groups, as well as their economic and social exclusion;

8. *Stresses* the need to effectively combat defamation of all religions, Islam and Muslims in particular, especially in human rights forums;

9. *Emphasizes* that everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which should be exercised with responsibility and may therefore be subject to limitations as provided by law and necessary for respect of the rights or reputations of others, protection of national security or of public order, public health or morals and respect for religions and beliefs;

10. *Urges* States to take resolute action to prohibit the dissemination of racist and xenophobic ideas and material aimed at any religion or its followers that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence;

11. *Also urges* States to provide, within their respective legal and constitutional systems, adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from defamation of religions, to take all possible measures to promote tolerance and respect for all religions and their value systems and to complement legal systems with intellectual and moral strategies to combat religious hatred and intolerance;

12. *Urges* all States to ensure that all public officials, including members of law enforcement bodies, the military, civil servants and educators, in the course of their official duties, respect different religions and beliefs and do not discriminate against persons on the grounds of their religion or belief, and that any necessary and appropriate education or training is provided;

13. *Underscores* the need to combat defamation of religions by strategizing and harmonizing actions at the local, national, regional and international levels through education and awareness-raising;

14. *Urges* States to ensure equal access to education for all, in law and in practice, including access to free primary education for all children, both girls and boys, and access for adults to lifelong learning and education based on respect for human rights, diversity and tolerance, without discrimination of any kind, and to refrain from any legal or other measures leading to racial segregation in access to schooling;

15. *Calls upon* the international community to initiate a global dialogue to promote a culture of tolerance and peace based on respect for human rights and religious diversity, and urges States, non-governmental organizations, religious bodies and the print and electronic media to support and promote such a dialogue;

16. *Affirms* that the Human Rights Council shall promote universal respect for all religious and cultural values and address instances of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred against any community or adherents of any religion;

17. *Calls upon* the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote and include human rights aspects in the dialogue among civilizations, inter alia, through:

(*a*) Integrating them into topical seminars and special debates on the positive contributions of cultures, as well as religious and cultural diversity, including through educational programmes, particularly the World Programme for Human Rights Education proclaimed on 10 December 2004;[4]

(*b*) Collaboration by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with other relevant international organizations in holding joint conferences designed to encourage this dialogue and promote understanding of the universality of human rights and their implementation at various levels;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the possible correlation between defamation of religions and the upsurge in incitement, intolerance and hatred in many parts of the world, to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

81st plenary meeting
19 December 2006

[4] See resolutions 59/113 A and B.